Making an Organizational Commitment to Women's Rights and Gender Equality:
IWP's learning from other institutions' gender integration work

Background

In the course of our work and meetings with other OSF colleagues, the International Women's Program (IWP) has engaged in conversations about OSF's work on women's rights from which several questions about OSF's organizational commitment to and strategy for advancing women's rights and gender equality have surfaced. In response to these ad-hoc conversations, in May 2012, IWP initiated an email discussion with colleagues across the OSF network who, over the years, had indicated interest in collectively exploring these questions. We also identified others who historically have been supportive of strengthening OSF's work on these issues. These initial email conversations helped IWP identify the need for a larger forum for staff across departments and programs at OSF to dialogue and develop action-oriented recommendations. At the same time, IWP began to consult with other organizations and fields that have instituted a gender-aware lens or better integrated women's rights into their work and organizational cultures. IWP staff reviewed relevant literature and conducted phone consultations with ten organizations (foundations and international non-government organizations) known internationally for their organizational commitment to women's rights and gender equality.[1]

The organizations we consulted described their process and articulated lessons from their experiences. We have highlighted below the experiences and tools from a few organizations, which we think are particularly interesting and potentially useful. We have also summarized common themes that emerged from the literature we reviewed and the organizational consultations as key points. Lastly, summaries of additional consultations can be found at the end of this brief.

Key Organizational Experiences

CARE USA (Consulted with Gender Unit Staff)

In 1999, CARE launched a Gender Equity Initiative and formed a task force to undertake a gender audit of the organization and develop an action plan based on those findings. The plan reflected both programmatic and operational goals. Shortly thereafter, CARE re-defined this work as a broader diversity agenda, expanding it to 'gender equity and diversity'. A taskforce was developed to carry the Gender Equity and Diversity initiative forward and the initiative was adopted as a strategic priority. The organization allocated unrestricted funds to the initiative. Soon thereafter a Gender and Diversity Unit was developed and charged with leading this work in close coordination with the human resources department. They developed organizational guidelines for undertaking an analysis of gender and diversity and required all country offices to complete the analysis which examined organizational culture, systems, procedures and structures. The data from the analyses has been used by country offices to develop action plans, which the Gender Unit supports them to implement. The Gender Unit staff, working with an inter-office task force also developed a Gender Equity and Diversity curriculum. The curriculum is intended for CARE staff and uses a participatory process to explore and teach about power dynamics, conflict resolution, diversity and gender. These issues are explored in the context of improving program and organizational quality and impact. The Gender Unit staff conduct this training in field offices and also for headquarters staff,

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[1] **Key literature reviewed**: World Bank (2002) *Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A strategy for action*; International Center for Research of Women (2006) *Gender Mainstreaming: Making it Happen*; Tiessen, R. (2007) *Everywhere, Nowhere: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Agencies,* Kumarian Press, Connecticut, USA; Interaction (2010). *The Gender Audit Handbook.* Mama Cash (2012), *Funding for Inclusion: Women and Girls in the Equation*; USAID (2012). *USAID Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment;* Foran, Swaine & Burns (2012). Improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action: progress in implementing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker, *Gender and Development 20:2, 233-247.*

often using a Train the Trainer model, so that country offices can continue the training on their own as new staff enter the organization. The Gender Unit has also done this training for external organizations. In addition to carrying out trainings, the Gender Unit supports other technical units in CARE to integrate gender into their work.

The human resources team and the Gender Unit staff have also worked closely together to find ways to hold their staff accountability to gender equity and diversity. CARE's recruitment process includes a question in the interview about gender equity. The leadership of the organization feels that this signals to candidates about the importance of the issue to the organization while also giving them an opportunity to assess the candidate's knowledge, attitudes and skills with respect to gender equity from both a programmatic and operational standpoint. They have also included in their appraisal process for managers and leaders an evaluation of how they are addressing gender equity in their work and practice.

Interaction (consulted with Vice President, Strategic Impact)
Interaction is a global membership organization with over 200 members with offices around the world that seeks to strengthen the accountability and transparency of their members in financial management, fundraising, governance and program performance. Interaction has developed a Gender Integration Framework and process for organizational assessment and transformation on gender equality. This framework and process are outlined in their Gender Audit Handbook, which is a step-by-step guide with tools for organization's to: assess their readiness for organizational transformation on gender equality; uncover staff perceptions regarding gender equality in the organization and programs; conducting focus groups to develop an organizational vision of gender equality; and create an organizational Gender Action Plan. The Audit provides organizations with three useful outputs: (1) a reflection of the status of gender equality within the organization; (2) a baseline for collective discussion and analysis; and (3) a participatory process that builds organizational ownership for the agency's gender equality initiatives and ongoing gender action planning. The Audit enables organizations to identify the impact of gender relations on their agency's culture, processes, programs and organizational performance and vice versa. When the specific patterns of gender relations in an organization are uncovered, it becomes possible to work within the organization to change the unequal patterns and to reinforce the equalizing ones, making the organization more gender responsive. Interaction has also incorporated into its membership agreement ethical and operational principles with respect to gender equality which encompass organizational governance, management, personnel and programs, as follows (all Interaction member organizations certify compliance with these standards):

- Develop a written policy that affirms a commitment to gender equality in organizational structures and in staff and board composition
- Train program staff in gender analysis for program planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Institute gender analysis and planning in all phases of the program process, in collaboration with local NGO partners.
- Integrate gender sensitivity into human resource development for staff at all levels to improve organizational effectiveness, promote nondiscriminatory relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles.
- Include gender awareness in job performance criteria.
- Strive to increase the number of women in senior decision-making positions and on Boards of Directors.
- Institute family friendly policies and create an environment that enables both women and men to balance work and family life.

- Develop policies and practices that support equal pay for equal work.
- Establish a mechanism, consistent with the organization's mission and constituency, which operates with a mandate from the CEO to promote and monitor the integration

Oak Foundation *(consulted with Head of Programme—Issues Affecting Women)*
The program at the Oak Foundation focused on issues affecting women recently initiated gender mainstreaming within the foundation. The current President is a strong advocate for women's rights and supported the process from the outset. They began by enlisting help from staff at Mama Cash to help orient Oak Foundation staff to gender mainstreaming concepts. The Director of the Women's Rights Program felt it was important that an outside expert in both the topic and grantmaking conduct the training. As part of the training, the foundation staff reviewed grant applications together to apply concepts in a practical way to their grantmaking. From there, the Women's Rights Program developed basic guidelines to help other programs at the foundation bring a gender-aware lens to their work and evaluate grants on this basis. They also initiated joint grantmaking and joint site visits with other grant departments so that they could share their lens, demonstrate the questions that they would ask during a grant selection and site visit process, and continue to help their colleagues learn while improving the overall organization's approach. The Women's Rights Program at Oak Foundation is currently working with Mama Cash to develop a follow-up plan for the work the process they began on gender integration last year.   They have not done very much on the operational aspects of this issue. Because Oak is small family foundation with few staff, human resource policies have been ad-hoc and not transparent. They do provide great flexibility for maternity and paternity leave and schedules once parents are coming back to work. With a new, supportive president, they hope to begin conversations about organizational policies and practice in a structured manner.

Oxfam Novib *(consulted with Gender Mainstream Coordinator/Program Management Advisor)*
Oxfam Novib is a Dutch foundation and one of the 14 national affiliates of the Oxfam International Confederation. They provide funding to national and civil society organizations around the world addressing the intersection of poverty and justice and have a history of underscoring the gendered nature of poverty and its particular impacts on women. In the 1990s, the organization developed a gender policy outlining its commitment to integrating women's rights and gender equality into their work. In 2001, they included a goal on gender equality in their strategic framework and began to develop tools for applying this goal to their grantmaking. Over the years, Oxfam Novib has committed resources to undergoing its own evaluations of its policies and practices internally and with its partners, which has allowed them to tweak and strengthen their work on women's rights and gender integration. A critical point in their evolution as an organization followed an evaluation of their gender integration work in 2006.   The evaluation highlighted that Oxfam Novib had lost ground in the practical application of a gender lens to their organization and grantmaking. As a result, they revised their gender policy and reframed their gender integration work within the larger goal of gender justice. Their new Gender Justice Policy includes the following strategies that are intended to be implemented in combination with each other: 1) Address gender-based violence, by supporting women's rights organizations, and also organizations with programs specifically on violence against women; 2) Mainstream gender justice within their partner organizations and their own programs; and 3) Promote women's leadership with an emphasis on inclusive (non-authoritarian, participatory and respectful) leadership styles and on connecting different organizations and movements—also called transformative leadership. A Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator was hired and they re-engaged with their work by strengthening internal capacity to understand and apply a gender lens to their grantmaking, including providing assistance to the organizations they fund to do the same. For example:

- All staff are required to receive 24 hours of 'gender' training a year and the organization has made a commitment to monitoring the extent to which employees apply knowledge and skills.
- A system of gender focal points was developed within each region. Regular meetings for focal points to review their work on gender mainstreaming and hold others accountable.
- To assess their partners that they considering funding, they developed several assessment and capacity building tools. One of these tools, the Gender Traffic Light, provides a framework for program officers to explore how much an organization knows about gender mainstreaming and what their organizational capacity is to carry out such work.
- They developed a manual called *Mainstreaming a Gender Justice Approach: A Manual to support NGOs in self-assessing their gender mainstreaming competence* which allows organizations to do their own 'gender audit' and make a plan to address their own gaps.
- They have also adopted a qualitative approach to monitoring and evaluation called 'The Most Significant Change' to assess their results internally and with their partner organizations on programmatic and operational levels. An article detailing the results of these pilot evaluations will be published in an upcoming issue of Gender and Development.

Summary of key points from interviews
- Determine the purpose from the outset and be able to articulate that purpose clearly and compellingly. There are several reasons why organizations begin the process of 'gender integration'—it could reflect that it is integral to a rights-based approach, that it is necessary for improved outcomes in programming, that it is to achieve gender parity in programming, resource allocation and in the organization at-large. The purpose could be a combination of reasons but should be rooted in a theory of change and evidence.
- Work from the bottom and the top: Identify allies amongst your colleagues in the organization-- those already working on women's rights or those who are willing to test something new on a small scale. At the same time, identify allies at senior levels of management and the board who are theoretically supportive of the idea from the outset and who can be there to push forward proposals/plans and the appropriate resources when necessary.
- Be clear, thoughtful and intentional with the language you choose to describe the process you initiate. There are pros and cons to using "gender" as there are to using "women." While the term gender mainstreaming is well-known and widely used, it is little understood and frequently associated as meaningless jargon. It is also considered by women's rights groups to detract from the intended purpose of such work—to develop an analysis that appreciates the unequal status of women compared to men. At the same time, using language specific to women may seem narrow to others and fail to convey the relevance to colleagues who do not identify their work with "women's rights" per se. Many organizations have decided to use the term 'gender integration.' Find language that is based on a strong theoretical underpinning but that is also strategic in advancing rather than impeding your process.
- Carry out preliminary research within your organization to assess where people stand. Explore the extent to which staff are familiar with concepts of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, integrating women's rights. Find out what these terms mean to them, what notions and misconceptions they may have. Identify what fears and concerns they may have should such a process unfold in the organization. Explore the value they think such work may add to their own work and the organization. Identify what resources they think they would need to carry such a process forward comfortably. The Gender Audit tool developed by Interaction that has been used by several organizations is a good example of structured approach to gathering this data.
- A multi-pronged approach is necessary: programmatic and operational aspects of gender mainstreaming must support each other. One process may need to happen before the other, or

they may happen at the same time, but in the end, the programmatic aspects will not be maintained over time if the commitment is not institutionalized in the operations of the organization.

- o On a programmatic level: It is important to maintain a robust program(s) specific to women and girls as well as identify and develop plans for integrating or mainstreaming a gender lens or gender equality into other programs. Institution-wide and program specific changes should be reflected in strategies and strategic plans so that they live beyond individual staff commitments.
- o At an operational level: Examine and look for ways to integrate gender equality into operational aspects of the organization, such as staff recruitment and retention practices, staff policies, management practices, and fiscal policies and procedures.
- Start your process small so that you can build evidence and a network of supportive colleagues overtime. Consider piloting something with a program with whom you already collaborate or with a program where the conceptual link is strong. These allies become spokespersons. Meanwhile, others in the organization begin to see results from the process. The relevance to their work and its potential benefit becomes clearer. This allows you to cultivate support while also building knowledge and skills within the organization.

This is an opportune time for OSF to reflect on its approach to women's rights as an institution. Our internal and external ways of working are being examined. Conversations and initiatives about efficiency, quality and innovation are happening in structured and informal ways. These are excellent entry points for discussing the organization's commitment to women's rights and gender equality and how they are reflected in our values, vision and mission.

<div align="center">***Lessons from other organizations***</div>

Donor/Funding agencies

Mama Cash *(consulted with Director of Programmes)*
As funder solely focused on women, Mama Cash naturally operates from a feminist perspective. For the past few years they have also been helping foundations and organizations reflect on their work on women and girls and gender equality and provide recommendations and in some cases technical support to help organizations strengthen this aspect of their work. They first began this processing by conducting consultations with donors in the EU and produced the reports *Untapped Potential: European Funding on Women and Girls* which examined European donors' grantmaking on women and girls and *Funding for Inclusion: Women and Girls in the Equation,* which argues that directing resources to women and girls is fundamental to advancing social justice goals and provides guidance to foundations on how to bring more attention to women and girls in their grantmaking. Staff at Mama Cash have also acted as technical advisors to CARE International's Gender Unit and the Women's Rights Program at the Oak Foundation to support them with in their own gender integration processes—with training materials and monitoring and evaluation tools. Mama Cash is now beginning new research to explore the barriers foundations have to gender integration and the elements within an organization. They are working with a leading research expert on this issue, Andrea Cornwall at the University of Sussex on this project.

USAID *(consulted with a Senior Gender Advisor)*
USAID's commitment to the full inclusion of women dates back to 1973, when the United States Congress passed the "Percy Amendment", requiring that particular attention be given to integrating women into national economies to improve their status and to assist the overall development effort. The "Women in Development" Office was created as a result of the amendment to help USAID achieve this in its foreign assistance. Over time, the office evolved into the Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment which currently leads USAID efforts to empower women and achieve gender equality through international development policies and programs. The office acts as USAID's central point of leadership and expertise on gender issues in social, economic, and political development policies and programs.

While the commitment to women's rights has existed for decades, it has taken time to ensure that appropriate resources and systems have been allocated to facilitate 'gender mainstreaming' across USAID. The Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment office initially began its efforts by identifying like-minded colleagues in other departments and working with them to develop a gender-aware lens of their work. The office then launched the Interagency Gender Working Group to demonstrate a technical commitment to integrating gender into USAID's work as well as advancing discussions and best practice globally. This unit began their work by identifying a sector or unit where it made sense to start the conversation and process, for example the intersection of gender and health, where there were obvious connections and initial data or evidence on what worked and what did not. They began to hold workshops across the agency to introduce definitions and concepts; and they began to show what gender equality and women's empowerment looked like within USAID funded programs and how it improved outcomes. From there, the agency allocated funding to achieve sector specific goals related to gender equality and women's empowerment. A major shift occurred two years ago when changes were made to USAID as an agency, including new funding guidelines that required a gender analysis, new definitions of gender issues in the budget, new senior positions devoted exclusively to gender equality and women's empowerment, and new common indicators to measure progress in this arena. The culmination of this slow and steady work (in addition to committed leadership) was the launch of the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Strategy that outlines the agency's internal and external commitment to women and girls, gender equality and women's empowerment.

***Wellspring Advisors** (consulted with the Director of the Women's Rights Program and the Director of Human Resources)*
Programmatically, Wellspring's ability to incorporate a gender lens into work throughout the foundation has resulted from the thinking and leadership of all program directors, not necessarily due to the women's rights team pushing for this organizational commitment. Wellspring has two women's right programs, the Women's Rights and the Reproductive Rights program, as well as a Sexual Orientation/ Gender Identity program. This means that three out of nine programs at Wellspring are always raising women and gender, so the perspective these programs bring to their work is largely present all of the time. In addition, the Economic Development and Children's Rights programs have, on their own, come to the conclusion of focusing substantially on women and girls because their fields require it.

In terms of policies, in general, Wellspring is committed to providing employees with flexibility in terms of schedules, telecommuting, and provides technology to everyone in the organization so that they can be work productively with flexible office schedules.

Development and Humanitarian NGOs

***ActionAid** (consulted with former Director of Policy)*
In 2002, ActionAid hired the Zimbabwean women's rights activist, Everjoice Win to lead the organization in strengthening their work on women's rights and integrating it across the agency. Initially, the organization was not clear in what they wanted, but with full support from the organization's leadership, Everjoice was able to develop and coordinate a plan. It was a process that took over five years to develop and implement and despite support from the leadership, she had to fight for the resources needed to carry out her work effectively. On a programmatic level, she began by identifying a few interested country programs with whom it make sense to collaborate. These local successes gave her the evidence she needed to eventually build an organization-wide framework on women's rights that outlined an approach specific to women's rights programming as well as principles and tools to help other sectors/programs in ActionAid think about and address women's rights in their work. This framework was developed in a consultative and participatory manner so that all thematic and country programs had the opportunity to provide input and feedback. At the organizational level, ActionAid conducted a gender audit to examine its own commitments to women in several areas (e.g. how many women, how many women in leadership positions, how where they helping women develop in their careers, etc.). From this gender audit, ActionAid developed a *Women in Leadership* strategy that outlined the organization's commitment to and plan for redressing gender inequalities within the organization. A feminist leadership forum was also established whereby women in senior leadership positions were asked to model a feminist approach to leadership, be mentors for other women, and also be 'gender equality' monitors for the organization. To her disappointment, the forum did not get the support it needed from women at top levels and failed to get off the ground.

***International Rescue Committee (IRC)** (Consulted with senior staff of Women's Protection and Empowerment Unit)*
In 2008, at the urging of the Women's Protection and Empowerment program, the IRC's headquarters' developed a gender equality policy that articulated the organization's commitment to advancing women's and girls' rights. The policy was a brief two page statement of vision and intent but lacked any details about how such a commitment would be carried out in IRC's programming. While the policy represented a positive step and was significant in that it came from the President, it lacked substance. The policy was shared by the President's Office via email with IRC's field offices, but the management did not give any indication or instructions for how country programs should adopt and carry out the policy. A system for monitoring the policy or accountability for it was never developed. In reality, few staff outside of the

headquarters office were aware of the policy. At the request of the women's program at IRC, the organizational leadership has since reflected on the initial policy and has renewed their commitment to embark on a gender equality policy in a more comprehensive way. IRC is currently undergoing an institution-wide strategic planning processing from which four organizational objectives were identified, of which "gender equality" is one. They are in the process of outlining what that objective means, how it will be achieved from both a programmatic and operational perspective, and how it will be monitored and evaluated. They have also identified practical issues with implementation such as: translating the objective from the headquarters level to individual country program that are semi-autonomous; and who is best-placed to lead such efforts institution-wide. While the women's program is technically skilled, they do not have the staff resources to steward that process.

Historically important to the IRC's programmatic focus on women is the founding in 1989 of the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC, formerly the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children). The WRC was established prior to IRC developing its own technical focus and unit on women's protection and empowerment programming and advocacy. The WRC was founded because of the recognition that the needs of displaced women and children were not being addressed within humanitarian responses. Initially funded as a spin-off organization of the IRC, the WRC continues to be an affiliate of the IRC, but has very much developed its own identify as an independent organization focused on advocacy and research related to the protection of women and children.   In the meantime, IRC's Women's Protection and Empowerment programming has grown considerably in scope and funding over the past five years.

Oxfam Great Britain (consulted with Senior Gender Advisor, Social Policy and Governance Team)
Oxfam GB developed a policy on gender in 1983. This was important in that in symbolized what Oxfam GB stands for with regard to gender equality, outlined the attitudes and practices staff are expected to adopt, and gave legitimacy to the process of ensuring that gender is integral to the organizations programmatic work and operations. The Senior Gender Advisor recommended drafting a policy that is brief and is developed in a participatory manner, using the process as a way of educating staff and changing attitudes within the organization.

Oxfam GB has worked hard to make organizational changes—using assessment of their culture, systems and structures as a starting point. Doing such an analysis was critical for them and it was important to get the support of their senior management to sponsor the full process of a 'gender audit'—from the commitment of resources for collecting data to support for sharing the findings within the organization and allocating resources for recommendations made from the audit. Her experience was that it is also important to be realistic about what can be covered in the audit and what commitments can be made to act on the findings. The danger of audits is that they can become massive and run the risk of losing support along the way. She highlighted the importance of an external facilitator for the audit process and also making it participatory.

An example of a concrete internal change that Oxfam GB has made is the decision to incorporate a gender lens to their hiring practices. They require gender expertise in most of their positions and they are clear in the hiring process that they have expectations that staff members to apply a gender lens to their work and what that means to Oxfam GB. Interview panels are always comprised of men and women and also include questions to assess the candidates' knowledge and analysis of how gender will impact their position and their work.